(Key-Holes and Fan-Lights: Thomas Merton's Complaint)

On May 15, 1889, Thomas Merton, a former patient at the Asylum for the Insane, writes the Inspectors of Prisons and Public Charities, W.J. O'Reilly and Robert Christie, to notify them of important matters "in connection with the treatment of patients in the Asylum."[lxxi] Merton reports that while a patient in Ward No. 12 he witnessed the brutal abuse of his ward-mates by the Supervisor, Kenned y, and Assistants Rutledge and McCreary.

According to Merton, the three attendants took John Manley and Allan Kennedy into a room from which he heard "faint cries." By looking through a key-hole and the fan light over the door Merton observed as they prepared their victim by "twisting a towel in the shape of a rope & putting it around the neck & tightening it, so that they could not scream." The Attendants subsequently punched and kicked the men, sometimes "standing on the bed so that when kicking these poor fellows, they would reach high up on the body."

Merton also reports how on another occasion he observed as an evidently confused patient from the "Refractory Ward" wandered away from the rest of his walking party and an Attendant "went after him & brought him back and struck him on the head, knocked him down & kicked him in the chest & bowels." He notes, ironically, that it was "wonderful" how careful the Attendants were, not to care for but "to watch the movements of the Doctors" for the best opportunity to abuse their patients. Merton concludes that "from the cunning way in which these attendants act" only a detective, posing as "a supposed lunatic," could catch them.

It is probably important to note, rather than suppose that he is merely acting out a grudge, that Merton appears to be far from totally negative about the Asylum and its staff. He describes the abusive Kennedy's successor, Mr. Arthur Bollard, as "a model man," and expresses his gratitude for the latter's "deep interest" in himself and other patients. He recalls Bollard's starting a